



SADC REGIONAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

An Analysis of the Regional Situation and Impact

Bulletin No. 2

#COVID19SADC

1. INTRODUCTION

This report provides an analysis of the COVID-19 on the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, and provides information on the impact, recommendations and current actions.

The report calls for particular attention to be considered towards sectors which have been adversely affected, and highlights key recommendations for SADC Member States and other stakeholders to be implemented in accordance with national COVID-19 response plans.

2. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL SITUATION OF COVID-19

As of 20th April 2020, more than 2.4 million cases of Covid-19 have been reported globally with more than 170,000 associated deaths. On the African continent, 20,092 cases were reported with more than 909 deaths within the same period. A total of 52 out of 54 countries in Africa have reported cases of COVID-19. The two countries that have not reported cases are both in the SADC region, namely: Union of Comoros and Lesotho. This means that 14 of the 16 SADC Member States have reported cases of COVID-19.

Most countries in the SADC region are now experiencing local transmission following the initial sporadic importation of cases. Thus, there is a need to improve contact tracing processes in most of the countries as this will allow the rapid identification and isolation of secondary cases, which is key to breaking transmission chains and slowing down the spread of the outbreak. The SADC regional epidemic is mainly driven by South Africa, Mauritius, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Madagascar whose caseload represent 93% of all cases reported in the region.

3. COVID-19 AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

According to the April 2020 World Economic Outlook, the widespread impact of COVID-19 has led to a gloomy economic outlook. Global economic growth forecast for 2020 was revised from 3.3% in January 2020 to a contraction of 3.4% in April 2020. Accordingly, the SADC regional economic growth forecast was also revised from a growth of 2.3% in October 2019 to a contraction of 3.4% in April 2020. With the forecasted economic downturn due to the pandemic and the budgetary implications for the policy measures which Member States are instituting, the fiscal deficit of the SADC region for 2020 is estimated to

widen to 8.9% compared to the October 2019 estimate of 4.5%. The regional debt level is estimated to rise to an average of 70.7% of GDP in 2020 from the October 2019 estimate of 60.1% of GDP.

Globally, oil prices have plummeted further after the world's energy regulator warned that the biggest production cuts in history will fail to offset the deepest fall in demand in 25 years. The International Energy Agency (IEA) has also announced that the market should brace for the lowest oil demand in 25 years because of the global lockdown across countries and territories to contain the virus.

4. IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN KEY SECTORS

● Public Health

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to create an acute shortage of essential supplies, including personal protective equipment (PPE), diagnostics and medical equipment. The COVID-19 testing capacity on the African continent, including the SADC region, remains limited and this has a bearing on the number of cases that countries are reporting.

It is estimated that 14% of patients with COVID-19 will require hospitalization and 5% of them will require Intensive Care Unit (ICU) treatment and oxygen therapy. This situation will require that all care centres be equipped with ventilator/life support machine, pulse oximeters, functioning oxygen systems and disposable, single-use, oxygen-delivering interfaces. All this will exert pressure on the health service delivery, already under heavy strain in many African countries, let alone SADC Member States.

● Food and Nutrition Security

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a record 45 million people were already estimated to be food insecure in the SADC region as a result of climatic shocks, such as drought and flooding as well as structural macro-economic and social factors. The COVID-19 outbreak and its debilitating impacts on livelihoods will only exacerbate the situation, eroding community coping capacities and deepening food and nutrition insecurity of vulnerable households and individuals. Furthermore, it is likely that the number of vulnerable people will increase due to, among others, loss of informal sources of income emanating from COVID-19 pandemic.

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● **Education**

Schools and tertiary institutions have been closed as a result of COVID-19, thereby affecting education and learning on an ongoing basis during this period. While some education institutions, especially private institutions have resorted to the use of virtual online facilities to ensure uninterrupted learning, others, especially in rural communities, do not have access to these facilities. Some Member States, with the support of partners are running classes on television and radio. There are also huge concerns about learners who have national or international exams at the end of 2020 and how they can ensure that they are adequately prepared for these exams.

● **Gender and Gender Based Violence**

The UN Women report shows that some countries around the world, particularly those highly affected by COVID-19, have registered up to 30% increase in reported domestic violence cases and around 33% increase in emergency calls for gender-based violence, with women and girls reported to be the victims of these acts.

With the lockdown and stay-at-home measures, women that have been in abusive relationships are now forced to be at home with their abusers for a prolonged period, making it difficult for them to reach out for help due to the presence of the abusive partner at home. Social distancing in itself makes it difficult for victims to reach out to their usual support systems, particularly, friends and other family members. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has made reporting of abuses harder due to the disruption of public services and limited access to communication facilities such as phones and helplines.

● **Manufacturing**

The COVID-19 will disrupt the small scale manufacturing and informal sector in the SADC region. Both local and export demand for manufactured goods is likely to reduce as a consequence of the pandemic. The SADC region is a major supplier of precious metals and, as a result of COVID-19, the prices of these metals used for industrial applications are on the decline. Similarly, prices of base metals key for industrialization such as copper, aluminium, chrome and manganese have all weakened due to lower Chinese demand as China consumes about 45% of metallic minerals produced worldwide. The supply chain disruption stemming primarily from the lockdown of factories across China, United States and the European Union (EU) poses the most immediate and prominent risk for manufacturers in the SADC region.

5. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- In terms of Public Health, Governments need to strengthen the implementation of all necessary public health measures including; contact tracing, isolation and treatment of COVID-19 and enforcement of hygiene practices including hand washing and cough etiquette.
- There is need to expand the testing capacity in terms of numbers and geographical coverage by working in partnership with specialized agencies like the World Health Organisation (WHO), Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and biotechnology companies and to conduct an assessment of Intensive Care Unit (ICU) bed capacity in order to prepare for an eventual overload of severe cases of COVID-19 that will require ICU care.
- Member States need to train adequate numbers of surveillance personnel and provide adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) to field staff.
- Member States need to pay special attention to the rising cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic by, among others, ensuring that women and girls are protected from all forms of abuse. Further, Member States need to incorporate gender perspectives in all responses to COVID-19 to ensure that actions during, and after the COVID-19 crisis aim to build more equal, inclusive and sustainable economies and societies.
- For the business sector, Member States need to put in place stimulus packages to assist in reviving businesses in the post COVID-19 recovery phase and, where these already exist, ensure progressive implementation of the measures.
- On food and nutrition security, Member States need to strengthen mechanisms that mitigate the impact of COVID-19 from disrupting the food supply chains and associated livelihoods, by minimizing disruption to farming operations, enabling access to production inputs, critical emergency veterinary drugs as well as produce markets by farming households.

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- Member States should partner with private sector, foundations, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and individuals to ensure that quality education and learning continue during the COVID-19 period, through the use of technology and other media.
- Member States should put in place measures to protect law enforcement and military personnel from the risk of being infected by the virus while undertaking their missions.
- Member States need to enhance the implementation of the SADC Regional Guidelines on Harmonization and Facilitation of movement of essential goods and services across borders to ensure sustained movement of essential supplies during the COVID 19 pandemic.
- SADC Member States need to consider ratifying the African Medicine Agency (AMA) Treaty adopted by the African Union Heads of State and Government in February 2019 and signed on the 29th October 2019 which is aimed at helping the African continent to have an overarching agency for medicine regulation and control.
- Member States need to prioritize and scale up humanitarian assistance programmes to cover the households that are likely to be affected by the COVID-19 measures such as those in informal businesses and temporary jobs
- Member States need to intensify concerted economic diversification efforts as well as faster rollout of regional industrialization programmes to boost industry and cushion economies against the adverse effects of the decline in global economic growth.
- The Regional Transport Transit Facilitation Cell (RTTFC) has finalised its short-term action plan, and co-opted the World Food Programme on the Cell to address the humanitarian dimensions of the pandemic. So far, the Cell has been providing support and guidance to Member States, Operators and other stakeholders in addressing trade and transport facilitation challenges which arose from the implementation on national COVID19 measures by Member States.
- SADC and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) have put together an Action Plan on ensuring continuity of learning in the context of COVID-19. SADC Secretariat-UNESCO partnership will focus on making distance learning possible for all learners at all levels; create awareness on the importance of health and hygiene, and on COVID-19 prevention through age-appropriate information about coronavirus and other infectious disease for teachers and learners as well as support teachers and teacher educators through access and capacity building to use relevant technologies to facilitate and support distance learning, among other interventions.
- The SADC Secretariat continues to engage with the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany through Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) to mobilise resources for acquiring essential medicines, medical supplies and medical equipment, especially testing kits, personal Protective, Equipment and ventilators.
- The SADC Secretariat is in the process of collecting information from Member States on national pharmaceutical manufacturers to assist in developing the regional database of pharmaceutical manufacturers in the SADC region.
- The SADC Secretariat is in the process of compiling a consolidated list of Member States needs in relation to essential medicines, medical supplies and equipment to effectively respond to COVID-19.

6. SADC REGIONAL COORDINATED RESPONSE ACTIONS

- Following the adoption of the SADC Guidelines on Harmonization and Facilitation of Movement of Essential goods and services across borders during the COVID-19 Pandemic, Member States are using the guidelines and aligning them with national laws and procedures. In addition, other stakeholders such as SADC Business Council, Private Sector Transport Operators and Corridor Management Institutions, among others, are aligning the regional guidelines with their own internal procedures.

ABOUT SADC

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is an organisation founded and maintained by countries in southern Africa that aim to further the socio-economic, political and security cooperation among its Member States and foster regional integration in order to achieve peace, stability and wealth. The Member States are: Angola, Botswana, Union of Comoros, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

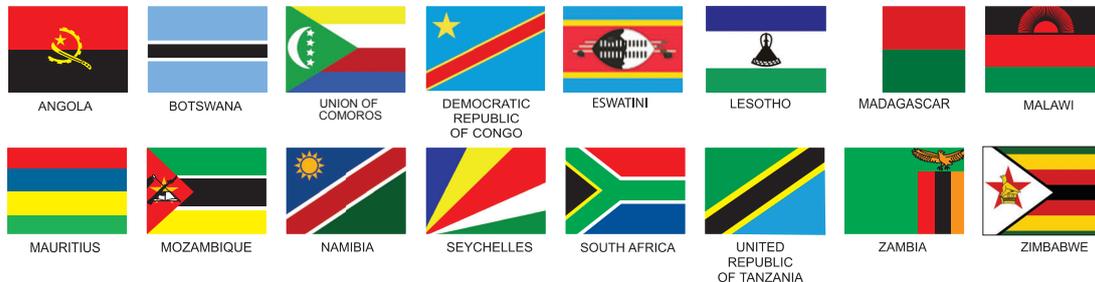
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1 REGION, 16 NATIONS WORKING TOWARDS A COMMON FUTURE

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